Workshop on
Opening Access to CGIAR Research and Knowledge

Workshop Summary

A half-day workshop on "Opening Access to CGIAR Research and Knowledge" was held at FAO, Rome, on 28 September 2007. Organized by the ICT-KM Program of the CGIAR, the event was just one in a series of consultative steps designed to improve and finalize a CGIAR-led strategy that aims to maximize access to and utilization of the CGIAR information global public goods (iGPGs) with the ultimate goal of improving agricultural research for development activities.

The workshop attracted participants attending the Web2forDev Conference held that same week, as well as individuals from relevant institutions in Rome. Over 40 participants, representing both northern and southern-based organizations, took part in the workshop discussions and mainly represented the following disciplines: information management, knowledge management and Web 2.0 tools for agricultural development and research. Few agricultural researchers attended the workshop.

One of the Strategy's initial steps was to get a better understanding of iGPG priority "users", their needs and any obstacles that might hinder their access to and use of the iGPGs needed by them to carry out their work more effectively. As such, the workshop focused specifically on obtaining additional perspectives on "users" needs.

The workshop maximized participation and dialogue by dividing participants into four groups that set to work at their respective tables after receiving brief context-setting presentations . Given that information needs are different at different stages of the research process, the groups focused on four general areas of that process: Problem Identification; Research Design; Doing the Research; and Results and Outputs.

Each table was then requested to consider the following:

- What does "opening access" mean to you with respect to this stage in the research process?
- Provide good existing examples of opening access at this stage
- Suggest future actions to be considered.

All participants had the opportunity to sit and discuss the topics at each table – the combined results for each area were summarized in the workshop's closing session. The participants also had the opportunity to identify the two items that, in their opinion, were the most important (items in bold below). Not all participants were familiar with the CGIAR, so discussions were not just restricted to CGIAR GPGs.

In the context of opening access to iGPGs, the following common themes emerged from across the four tables:

- Opening access to data, information, knowledge and people is an important and necessary step for improving agricultural research for development
- Stakeholder consultation is relevant and necessary at all stages of the research process
- A culture of open sharing at all stages of research should be nurtured
- Incentive systems and institutional policies need to be examined and changed
- Interdisciplinary teams should be involved at all stages of the research process
- Technologies (Web 2.0), approaches and policies **(Open access repositories now! At all institutes!)** to promote and support open access exist and should be employed.

Discussions Summary

More specific results of the workshop discussions are summarized below according to the four stages in the research process.

1. Problem Identification

Applicable at All Levels:
Problem identification has very different implications at multiple levels: organization, program, project and ground level. Discussions were not structured according to these specific levels. Instead, most of the discussions tended to center on problem identification at the ground level.

Institutional Challenges:
Institutionally, there exist some inherent structural challenges to problem identification:

- There is too much supply driven identification
- Relatively few resources are channeled into problem identification
- Projects usually need to be designed first before funding is available, thereby limiting resources for problem identification
- Staff need to understand their organization's mission – some missions are not clear. As such, there is a need to focus and communicate the limits of the research the organization is willing to consider

Attitudinal Changes:
Opening access at the problem identification stage (and other stages, too) will require some attitudinal and policy level changes. Ideas include:

- Change the performance appraisal process to encourage more openness and honesty about problems and "failures"
- Change the culture to enable more transparency
- **Open current research "networks" as they tend to be too closed**
- **Recognize that researchers may not really be interested in opening access**
- Encourage donors to truly collaborate
- Conduct "after action" reviews and share the results publicly
- Encourage the freer sharing of research ideas
- Make researchers aware of open access issues

- Acknowledge that different skills are needed for different levels of problem identification
- Aim for a multidisciplinary team
- Share future research plans
- Collaborate more
- Create a problem identification checklist
- **Establish a common framework for spreading research results**

Pooling Needs Assessments:
Challenges exist with respect to obtaining information about specific problems; and to finding surveys already completed on a given topic. One needs to look at what's been done before – perhaps a "needs assessment" pool is required **(don't re-do needs assessments, but rather assess the assessments). Create a problem market place/space to post needs,** as well as a centralized location (marketplace) for donor opportunities. **Mechanisms are needed for sharing ideas, problems and solutions publicly, and for identifying what worked and what did not work. I**t is also necessary to be able to find "bad" practices (internal reports and reflection) – perhaps implement a CGIAR problem blog and an open Ideas Repository.

Consulting the Beneficiary:
Problem identification requires learning about the problem as it relates to the principal stakeholders at the ground level. This does not necessarily mean talking directly with farmers; more likely this will involve talking with extension agents and farmer organizations. However, the c**apacity level of those who should be involved in problem identification may need to be addressed from the standpoints of (i) the need for leaders to be able to "talk" the language; (ii) access to technologies; and (iii) the absence of information systems.**

2. Research Design

Consultation:
There is a trade-off between consultations and funding (how many and how wide). More **stake holder consultations during the design phase of projects are** required with a wider group of actors to discover their needs and to learn about things that are already happening. **Beneficiaries need to participate before the design phase is complete. There is also a need to talk to end users. In addition, a cost effective mechanism for involving users/beneficiaries in the consultation process is necessary.**

For interventions, use multiple mechanisms for consultation and engagement. Use a knowledge sharing space for the research design process, and be open to changes requested by users during the design process. It is important to also track the various consultation processes and their outputs and outcomes. Hold meetings outside the CGIAR Centers. The consultation process used by the ICT-KM Program is itself an example of such 'design' phases, and needs to be replicated and documented.

Awareness Raising/Incentives:
Research scientists may not understand the whole idea of open access. An effort is required to sensitize research scientists in this area and to raise awareness about the tools available for scientists to carry out consultations. It may be

necessary to look at structures /incentives/reward systems to open the research design process. External and CGIAR-wide incentives and priority setting influences design choices.

Sharing Best Practices:
It is a challenge to find good design expertise and methods. An open access repository of science documents and papers with design and method information would be useful. Utilizing a more diverse, interdisciplinary design team could help. A useful **intervention could be to document best practices for designing research –** there exists a need for better documentation, and to share processes, best practices, tools and content.

Project Information Sharing:
Sharing donor relation information across Centers should be encouraged. The **Project database inventory** (CIAT project manager tool) provides information on CGIAR projects. Access to an inventory of all CGIAR projects as they are being designed is important. Sharing information on proposals is also especially important.

3. Doing the Research

Doing Research:
Links need to be established between researchers and researchers, and researchers and others. **Research teams need to be interdisciplinary (for example, they could include communications expertise). IPR expectations need to be clearly defined.** Linkages for information sharing with national partners need to be strong. It is important to involve users in order to ensure the take-up of outputs.

Attitudinal Change:
Scientist incentives should be changed to include farmer participation as a valid part of doing the research (it is necessary to establish different channels – other than peer reviewed ones). Incentives for scientists (career support) are needed to open up, change attitudes and result in institutional change. There is also a need to f**orce thinking out of the box,** and to keep open to change during the process. This must be supported from above in the organization for it to be a reality.

Ongoing Sharing:
Carry out an informal exchange of information from scratch on Wikis, blogs, etc. Create a sharing "problems and solutions" space. Sharing should be in real time throughout the research process, not just at the end. Find ways to figure out what research is being PLANNED before it occurs – perhaps using MTPs as a reference.

Open Publishing:
Different publishing concepts should be explored. A System-wide consultation with partners on publishing procedures, strategies and best practices is recommended. There needs to be a dialog with the Science Council regarding open archives and open access.

4. Results and Outputs

Results/Outputs Definition:
Where does an output stop? An output is most often seen as a publication;. It is necessary to look at outputs in a broader fashion. Most discussions focus on products, outputs and literature; but there is a need to move beyond this and to open up peoples' minds.

Donor Accountability:
Opening access to donor accountability is also an issue. Outputs also include annual reports, plans, creative marketing, logframes, etc, so the process of research is more transparent. How do you map attribution of outputs to donors?

Sharing Results/Outputs Ideas:

- Increase the number of users of results through different formats
- Use multi media and multi channels
- Repackage results
- Build communication into the research process
- Ensure results stay in the public zone/domain
- Share what does not work
- **Use institutional archives**
- **Multimedia & multi channel outputs roundtable days**
- **Partner with local actors to develop outputs**
- **Deliver outputs as a funded stage in the project cycle**
- **Translate output in recommendation plan implementation**
- **Build full text repositories**
- Publish lessons learned
- Use open space to announce research results
- Evaluate how the results can be used
- Make results available in a simple form
- Researchers + Communication Professionals = translation of scientific results.
- Use a multi channel approach to disclosing outputs – pushing outputs via xml to other sites
- Use video & radio
- Publicize not only what is done, but how it is done
- Enable free, full-text access to original materials
- Find out how people access information
- Translate "referred journal" articles into laypersons' language
- Be aware that CGIAR performance rating by peer reviewed articles may involve contradictions
- **Consider IP issues on data and text**